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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet provides an array of statistical data on working mothers, such as the need for child care, the child care providers, who supports child care, and work and family. Data sources include a number of federal government and private organizations. Among the statistics highlighted are the following: (1) in 1988, 65 percent of all women with children under 18 worked outside the home; (2) one in every four mothers in the work force maintains her own family; (3) 60 percent of all children had working mothers in 1988; (4) by the year 2000, 80 percent of women in their prime childbearing years (25-44) will be in the labor force; (5) 11.3 million children under 6 have working mothers; (6) approximately 3 million people, mostly women, are employed as child care providers; (7) many providers working in child care centers do not receive benefits; (8) child care workers rank in the lowest 10 percent of wage earners in the United States; (9) staff turnover rate in child care centers and day care homes is between 35-60 percent per year; (10) the United States has no comprehensive child care policy--federal and state governments and labor unions offer some assistance to providers and parents; (11) child care is a family's fourth largest expense, after housing, food, and taxes; (12) the cost of child care precludes some women from working; and (13) child care and parental leave initiatives have been introduced in Congress. (The document also includes an outline of high-quality day care practices.) (KC)

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Women, Work and Child Care

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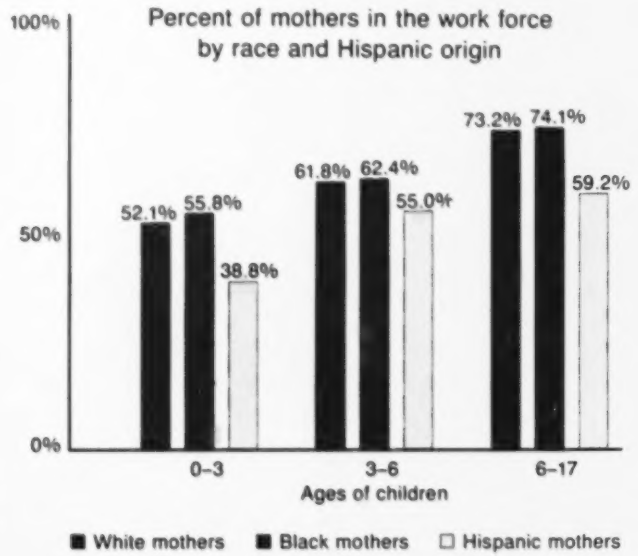
The Need

In March, 1988, 65% of all women with children under 18 worked outside the home.

- In all, 21.5 million mothers were in the labor force; 73% worked full-time.
- Since 1980, the greatest increase in the rate of labor force participation has been for married women with preschool children. In 1988, 57% of mothers with children under 6 worked, and more than half (51%) of mothers of infants were at work before their babies were a year old.
- Nearly three-fourths (73%) of mothers with school-aged children 6 to 17 were in the labor force.
- Fewer than 10% of U.S. families consist of a father who goes to work and a mother who stays home with the children.



1 in every 4 mothers in the work force maintains her own family. More than 5.3 million single mothers are working.

- 58% of all working women are either single (never married), divorced, separated or widowed or have husbands who make less than $15,000 a year.
- 35% more families would be below the poverty line if both parents did not work.

In 1988, 60% of all children had working mothers.

- More than 35 million children had mothers in the labor force.

By the year 2000, 80% of women in their prime childbearing years (between 25 and 44) will be in the labor force.

- 2 out of 3 preschoolers and 4 out of 5 school-aged children will have mothers in the labor force by 1995.

11.3 million children under 6 have working mothers.

- About 40% of these children are cared for by their fathers, grandparents or other relatives.
- 23% are in child care centers or school settings.
- 22% are cared for by nonrelatives in that person's home, a system known as family day care.
- 6% are cared for by a nonrelative in the child's own home.
- About 8% are cared for by their mothers at their place of work.
- 62% of women working part-time choose care by relatives, as opposed to 39% of those working full-time.

Sources for this Fact Sheet:

Bureau of Labor Statistics
The House Committee on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Defense Fund
National Association for the Education of Young Children
Census Bureau
The Urban Institute
Child Care Action Campaign
Runzheimer International
Children's Foundation
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Child Care Employee Project
National Women's Law Center
Work/Family Directions
Women's Legal Defense Fund
The Conference Board

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The Providers

There are approximately 3 million people employed as child care providers in the U.S.; more than 96% are women.

• About 1.2 million work in more than 66,000 child care centers and preschool programs as directors, teachers and aides.

• Approximately 1.75 million work in their homes as family day care providers.

• There are about 190,000 licensed or regulated family day care homes. It is estimated that 3 times that number are unregulated.

Many providers working in child care centers do not receive benefits.

• Only one-third to one-half receive health insurance.

• About one-third are not paid for overtime.

• Many do not receive paid vacations.

• Fewer than 1 in 5 has a retirement plan.

Child care workers rank in the lowest 10% of U.S. wage earners.

• In 1988, the median salary for center-based providers was $9,724 a year (based on weekly earnings). For those in family day care, it was about $4,800. More than 40% of full-time child care workers earn less than $5 an hour.

• Child care workers earn less than animal caretakers, parking lot attendants and garbage collectors.

Staff turnover rate in child care centers and day care homes is between 35–60% a year.

• Low wages are the primary cause of high turnover rates among child care workers.

• Lack of respect, difficult working conditions, low staff morale and employee burn out also contribute to high turnover among providers.

Training of providers is essential to high quality child care.

• The average child care provider has 14.6 years of education.

• More than half of providers have some college education.

• 40 states support the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, a competency-based program to train center workers and family day care and infant care providers.

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO QUALITY CARE

The following are characteristics of high-quality child care programs:

• Children are relaxed, happy, and involved in activities.

• Ample space and play materials are available for the children.

• Children of varying ages are treated in a manner appropriate to their age.

• The staff meets regularly to plan and evaluate their program.

• Parents are welcome to observe, make suggestions, and participate in the work of the program.

• Staff are trained in child development as well as health and safety.

Optimal ratios and group sizes are:

Age of child	Optimal Ratio	Group Size
Infants	1:3	6–8 children
2–3 years	1:4 or 5	10–14
4–5 years	1:7–9	16–20

• 31 states do not regulate group size for preschoolers. In 12 states, 6 or more infants may be cared for by a single provider. Only 3 states meet experts' recomendation that no more than 3 infants be cared for by 1 person.

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National Outlook: Who Supports Child Care?

The United States has no comprehensive child care policy. Federal and state governments, employers and labor unions offer some assistance to providers and parents.

The Dependent Care Tax Credit is the largest source of government support for child care. The benefit totalled $3.4 billion in FY 1988.

• Under this law, parents of children under age 13 may claim up to $2,400 for the cost of care for 1 child and $4,800 for 2 or more children. Depending on income, tax credits range between $480 and $720 for 1 child and $960 and $1,440 for 2 or more children. Low-income families, especially those below taxable income, receive little or no benefit from the credit.

Between 1977 and 1986, direct federal outlays for child care programs, which benefited mainly poor and low-income families, declined nearly 25%.

Major federal programs which provide support for child care include:

• **Social Services Block Grant/Title XX** provides general funding to states for human services, including subsidized child care for low-income parents.

• **Head Start** provides funds to local organizations which offer comprehensive preschool education to low-income children. The majority of Head Start programs are half day. It currently serves 17% of eligible children.

• **Child Care Food Program** provides subsidies to centers and qualified family day care homes for meals and snacks.

• **The Family Support Act of 1988,** a welfare reform initiative, includes provisions for child care assistance to participants in education, employment and training programs and transition assistance for the first year of employment.

In 1988, out of approximately 6 million companies in the U.S., only 4,150 provided child care assistance to their employees.

According to the Conference Board, employers provided a variety of benefits for their employees:

• **On-site care.** Employer operates or provides care in or near the workplace.

• **Subsidies or vouchers.** Employers provide their staff subsidies or vouchers which they may redeem at a center or at the caregiver of their choice.

• **Discounts.** Employer arranges discounts for employees at selected child care programs.

• **Flexible benefits ("cafeteria plan").** Employee selects child care among other benefits.

• **Spending accounts (salary reduction).** Employee takes reduction in income and pays for child care out of a nontaxable account.

• **Information and referral service.** Employers devise an in-house information and referral system or contract with an outside company to provide one.

• **Establishing family day care homes.** Company recruits and pays for training and licensing of a caregiver who provides care for employees' children.

• **Sick child care.** Employer provides care for sick children through in-home nursing services or sick child care centers.

• **Alternative work patterns.** Employer policies include: flex-time, job sharing, family leave and parental sick leave.

Parental leave and child care have become important organizing tools and bargaining issues for labor unions.

• The Bureau of National Affairs reports that 40% of manufacturing and 30% of nonmanufacturing agreements include parental leave provisions. Unions have also established child care programs including information and referral networks, flex-time and alternative work schedules, and on-site centers.

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Work and Family

Child care is a family's fourth largest expense, after housing, food and taxes.

• The annual cost of care for 1 child ranges between $2,400 and $9,000 in urban areas, with the average about $3,400 per child. Costs for infant care are even higher.

• While the average working family spends about 10% of its yearly income on child care, low-income families spend nearly 25% of their incomes on care.

• In 1988, single working mothers, with median annual income of $15,077, expended 23% of their income for average-priced care for 1 child.

For some mothers who want to work, the cost of child care precludes their joining the labor force.

• According to the General Accounting Office, a lack of affordable child care prevents 60% of mothers on AFDC from participating in education and training programs.

The hours before and after school and school vacations are a working parent's dilemma.

• Experts estimate that between 2 and 7 million children between the ages of 6 and 13 are without adult supervision for some part of the time their parents are at work.

• Older brothers and sisters are often responsible for their younger siblings.

Child care and parental leave initiatives have been introduced in Congress.

• Congress has considered child care legislation which would increase the supply, subsidize the cost and improve the quality of child care for low- and moderate-income families, as well as provide training for providers.

• Family and medical leave initiatives would provide unpaid, job-protected leave for mothers and fathers to care for newborn, newly adopted or ill children or adult dependents.

About 60% of all working women have no paid parental leave.

• Paid parental leave is usually linked to disability insurance. The Pregnancy Disability Act of 1978 prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy. It requires insured wage compensation for the period (usually 6 to 8 weeks) a woman cannot work, if her employer provides other kinds of short-term disability coverage.

• It is estimated that fewer than 40% of working women are covered by disability insurance.

• Only 33% of employees of mid- and large-size companies have benefits which include unpaid maternity or parental leave.

• Women who are not covered by any policy often must use a combination of sick days, vacation days or leave without pay during this period.

About WOW: Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) works nationally to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and girls. For 25 years, WOW has been at the forefront of women's employment issues. WOW leads a national network of more than 400 independent women's employment programs and advocates in 48 states. Each year, WOW's network serves more than a quarter of a million women seeking employment information, counseling, training and jobs.

About the Commission: The National Commission on Working Women was created to focus on the needs and concerns of the approximately 80% of women in the work force who are concentrated in low-paying, low-status jobs in service industries, clerical occupations, retail stores, factories and plants. In January, 1987, NCWW merged with Wider Opportunities for Women, Inc.

The NCWW encourages broad distribution of this fact sheet. Those interested in reproducing it are simply required to inform our office. Production of this fact sheet was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

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